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Date: April 16, 2024

To: Aaron Albaugh, Chairman
Lassen County Board of Supervisors

From: Barbara Longo, Agency Director
Health & Social Services Agency

Subject: Community Social Services CalWORKs System
Improvement Plan (Cal-SIP) Report

Background:

Cal-OAR (Outcomes and Accountability Review) is a local, data-driven program management system that facilitates continuous improvement of county CalWORKs programs by collecting, analyzing, and disseminating outcomes and best practices. As required by Welfare and Institutions Code (WIC) 11523, Cal-OAR consists of three core components: performance indicators, a county CalWORKs Self-Assessment (Cal-CSA), and a CalWORKs System Improvement Plan (Cal-SIP).

The Cal-OAR Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) process (which includes the Cal-CSA and Cal-SIP) will take place over five-year cycles. The Cal-SIP is the third component of the Cal-OAR CQI process. The Cal-SIP is based on the information gathered and reported from the Cal-CSA, each California Welfare Department will develop a plan to improve the selected performance measures. The Cal-SIP will select a set of measures or measure for focused improvements and develop to improve the selected performance measures.

Fiscal Impact:

No Fiscal Impact

Action Requested:

- 1) Receive and Approve Report for Submittal to State.

CalWORKs System Improvement Plan (Cal-SIP) Report

County: Lassen

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Executive Summary

1. Please summarize the performance measures selected for improvement.

Lassen County's Community Social Services Department selected Orientation Attendance Rate and Ongoing Engagement Rate for the focus of the Cal-OAR System Improvement Plan (Cal-SIP). These programmatic groupings were strategically identified as areas that directly impact client success and lead to Self-Sufficiency. Improving the Orientation Attendance Rate and the Ongoing Engagement Rate will enhance Lassen County's service delivery of the CalWORKs program and assist families using a successful, supportive approach that leads to sustainable Self-Sufficiency.

2. Please provide a comprehensive list of improvement strategies identified within the Cal-SIP.

Lassen County seeks to improve their performance by implementing the following strategies:

Goal 1: Increase Orientation Attendance Rate to 60% from 50%.

Strategy 1: Enhance staffing levels, workload manageability, and operational efficiency

Action Steps:

- Cross-train Integrated Case Workers (ICWs) in WTW
- Train ICWs to conduct warm handoffs to WTW Workers
- Assign WTW Lead for QA/QI
- Distribute caseload to WTW Workers to increase opportunities for Orientation
- Recruit 2 Welfare-to-Work (WTW) Workers

Strategy 2: Expand Orientation Opportunities

Action Steps:

- Identify transportation barriers during intake prior to orientation
- Display bus transportation routes in lobby along with orientation dates and times
- Develop Welfare-to-Work Orientation Video in English and Spanish (explore on-line availability)
- Train new Welfare-to-Work Workers in conducting Orientation

Goal 2: Increase Engagement Rate to 20% from 3%.

Strategy 1: Enhance capacity to support client engagement

Action Steps:

- Cross-train Integrated Case Workers (ICW) in WTW & train ICWs to conduct warm handoffs to WTW Workers
- Assign WTW Lead for QA/QI
- Assign 2 ICWs as WTW Workers
- Balance caseloads so WTW Workers can dedicate more time to client engagement
- Schedule routine follow-ups with each WTW client

Strategy 2: Enhance Equity and Social Awareness toward WTW Clients

Action Steps:

- Actively recruit candidates best suited to serve the diverse community
- Ensure all CWD staff complete REIB Trainings twice a year
- Display bus Transportation routes in lobby
- Ensure Trauma-Informed Care trainings ongoing for staff

Introduction

The CalWORKs Outcomes and Accountability Review (Cal-OAR) is a local, data-driven program management system that facilitates continuous improvement of county CalWORKs programs by collecting, analyzing, and disseminating outcomes and best practices. As required by Welfare and Institutions Code (WIC) 11523, Cal-OAR consists of three core components: performance indicators, a county CalWORKs self-assessment (Cal-CSA), and a CalWORKs system improvement plan (Cal-SIP).

The Cal-OAR continuous quality improvement (Cal-CQI) process (which includes the Cal-CSA and Cal-SIP) takes place over five-year cycles. The first Cal-OAR cycle commenced on July 1, 2021, with the implementation of Cal-OAR. The Cal-SIP is the second component of the Cal-OAR CQI process. The Cal-SIP is based on the information gathered and reported from the Cal-CSA, wherein each CWD will develop a plan for improving their CalWORKs program. The Cal-SIP will select a measure or set of measures for focused improvements and development to improve the selected performance measures while pairing each Cal-SIP goal with an equity goal and/ or strategy.

1. Describe your approach to the Cal-SIP Report

Lassen County contracted a team from the University of California, Davis Center for Human Services (UCD) to support the coordination of the Peer Review and System Improvement Plan Report. UCD created a spreadsheet outlining the writing lead, support, and reviewer for each section, along with due dates for the draft and final version of each section. UCD took the lead on drafting sections that involved compiling or analyzing data from the Peer Review and sections describing overall processes. County staff served as the reviewers for these sections. County staff drafted all other sections.

To facilitate co-writing and multiple rounds of revision, the team utilized a Word version of the report stored in a cloud server (Box.com). UCD monitored report deadlines and maintained the master draft. UCD also proofread and edited the report before transferring the content to the CDSS template.

Partners and collaborators will continue to inform the CWD's improvement efforts both informally, through periodic interagency meetings and shared client casework interactions, and formally, through additional stakeholder engagement events to be held in conjunction with the next SIP Progress Report. The CWD will continue to make efforts to gather feedback from current and former clients and will explore the best method(s) for encouraging clients to share their valuable insights, i.e., focus groups, surveys (at appointments and/or other methods), or follow-up phone calls.

2. Briefly describe past and current system improvement efforts.

Lassen County's CalWORKs program has continuously adapted to improve services to the clients and the community at large; however, the Cal-OAR process is Lassen

County's first dedicated response to Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) for CalWORKs. Efforts that have been established into the Lassen CWD's CalWORKs program prior to Cal-OAR include, but are not limited to, training for Integrated Case Workers (ICWs) in CalWORKs and Welfare-to-Work, warm handoffs from ICWs to Welfare-to-Work (WTW) workers, motivational interviewing to address client barriers, referrals to appropriate community-based services, and ongoing engagement through ancillary supports.

3. Briefly describe the success or failure of those efforts at improving service delivery or programmatic outcomes.

Success in the efforts and service delivery improvement methods have been measured through the feedback from internal staff, clients, external partners, success stories, and routine experiences from the Welfare-to-Work Worker(s). Recurring communications between the WTW Worker and the clients identified an increase in client motivation, as the WTW Worker may offer ancillary support, program education, and identify supportive services. Supportive services may include transportation, childcare, or job training resources. The Cal-OAR Performance Measures, CalSAWS reports, and adhoc reports will enable Lassen County to measure and monitor outcomes of quality improvement practices throughout the Cal-SIP.

4. An overview of the CWD's organizational vision and mission (optional).

Lassen WORKs provides a multitude of social safety net services designed to support at-risk families and individuals. Lassen WORKs vision and mission is to have high-performance and equitable delivery of the administered programs to improve the quality of life for the people in our community.

The mission of Lassen WORKs is to serve individuals, families and communities of Lassen County by:

- Employing a team of professional, knowledgeable, and courteous staff
- Offering quality confidential services in a responsible, timely, and compassionate manner
- Providing a safe place dedicated to building trust and reducing fears
- Working together to help people reach their life goals and achieve personal success

Section 1: Measures for Improvement and Strategies

Part 1: Measure and Goal Narrative

1. Describe the reason for selecting the measure or programmatic grouping of measures.

The Orientation Attendance rate was selected because, although community partners did not identify the Initial Engagement programmatic measures as a priority for the county at this time, internal staff and clients both identified Orientation Attendance and OCAT/Appraisal Timeliness as areas that would benefit from attention/improvement.

The CWD also selected the measure Engagement Rate from the Ongoing Engagement programmatic grouping as the CWD has consistently performed below the state average on this measure, and the CWD is generally aware of challenges with performance on this measure.

2. Do partners and collaborators agree this is a measure or programmatic grouping of measures that should be focused on at this time?

Although partners did not identify the Initial Engagement programmatic grouping of measures as a priority for the county in the same way that staff and clients did, they did highlight barriers to engagement, e.g., stigma, and recommend multiple strategies for improving initial engagement of clients, including virtual appointments and flexible meeting options to accommodate diverse needs and complex client schedules. Flexible and/or virtual options would not only accommodate clients' unique needs and lessen the impact of barriers like transportation and childcare, both challenges noted by partners as impacting clients throughout their case. As partners also noted, flexible policies/options would allow staff better work life balance. While partners recognized the value of having staff who themselves were previously CalWORKS clients in addressing the challenge of stigma, having virtual options might also be an opportunity to engage clients concerned about accessing public assistance.

During discussions around the Ongoing Engagement programmatic grouping of measures, there was general consensus among partners and collaborators about the key challenges and barriers in Lassen County. Partners provided insight into factors that impede ongoing engagement and proposed strategies for improving engagement moving forward, including addressing transportation and childcare challenges for clients, and improving partner collaboration.

3. Describe any anticipated interactions with other measures.

The Orientation Attendance rate, as part of the Initial Engagement programmatic grouping, impacts performance on all subsequent measures. For example, low participation in the orientation can result in low attendance at the first activity. Without timely participation in an appropriate first activity, clients are less likely to continue engagement, which can result in sanctions.

Low engagement will also impact clients' success in getting and maintaining employment. A high rate of orientation attendance is anticipated to positively impact all subsequent measures, in particular those in the Initial Engagement programmatic grouping.

Similar to the Orientation Attendance rate impacting performance on all subsequent measures, the Engagement rate is impacted by all of the previous Initial Engagement measures, and in turn, interacts with the other measures in the Ongoing Engagement programmatic grouping, i.e., the Sanction and Sanction Resolution rates. As stated above, low participation in orientation can result in low attendance at the first activity, which may then make clients less likely to continue engagement, leading to sanctions and negatively impact clients' success in getting and maintaining employment.

4. Describe how the CWD will track performance measure improvement.

The CWD will monitor and analyze the Orientation Attendance and Engagement rates on an ongoing systematic basis. The Program Manager, Analyst, and the Technical Support Specialist will pull data monthly and lead quarterly Cal-OAR check-ins. The meeting will begin with a review of the most recent trend reports and provide progress updates on the various strategies and action steps. Every six months, the team will specifically review progress towards the stated goals – 5% increase every 12 months and 8.5% increase every 12 months, respectively. The team will use CalSAWS reports, and the Cal-OAR data provided by CDSS to identify successes and challenges and determine needed improvements based on the challenges.

Part 2: Goal-level Descriptions

Goal 1: Increase Orientation Attendance Rate to 60% from 50% by reviewing Cal-OAR performance measures, CalSAWS reports, and adhoc reports; improving by 5% every 12 months within 2 years (for a total of a 10.0% improvement).

- **Strategy 1:** Enhance staffing levels, workload manageability, and operational efficiency
- **Strategy 2:** Expand Orientation Opportunities

1. Explain the reasoning or methodology which was used to determine this goal.

Lassen County utilized data on the performance measures and feedback from partners and collaborators to identify priorities and goals for the SIP. Multiple tools (e.g., needs gap analysis, problem tree analysis, etc.) were used with internal staff, external partners, and clients to determine areas most in of improvement and identify root causes that could inform improvement goals and strategies.

Although community partners did not identify the initial engagement programmatic grouping of measures as a priority as this time, the Orientation Attendance rate was selected because internal staff and clients both identified Orientation Attendance and OCAT/Appraisal Timeliness as areas that would benefit from focused improvement efforts.

2. What led the CWD to these improvement strategies?

Upon completing the CSA Report, the Cal-OAR planning team met to discuss partner feedback and further narrow the focus for the SIP. The team discussed each performance measure identified as a priority by partners, drafting a broad list of potential strategies for each measure. The team then considered the resources needed to implement the various strategies and each strategy's potential for impacting the measure, i.e., will the strategy have a broad or narrow impact. The team selected the strategies that would have the most impact while also being feasible given the CWD's current and projected resources.

Clients described being overwhelmed by the amount of information presented at orientation and recommended spreading the information across multiple sessions or providing online videos. Clients suggested online videos would provide better comprehension by accommodating different learning styles and allowing clients to process the information at their own pace. Self-paced viewing would also increase scheduling flexibility, which could address other challenges clients may face.

While recognizing clients' needs for flexibility and accommodation, the CWD also prioritizes opportunities for engagement and thus encourages clients to attend orientation in-person. To balance these priorities and meet client needs, the CWD will develop and implement the use of an orientation video, ideally to be viewed at the office. However, the county will also explore options for offering the video online for clients for whom in-person attendance is a major barrier and/or for whom self-paced viewing is an appropriate or preferred accommodation. The CWD will enhance the existing Welfare-to-Work (WTW) Orientation PowerPoint to include embedded video and audio of an internal staff member explaining the program, hourly requirements, activities, rights & responsibilities, time clocks, ancillary supports, work pays equation, good cause exemptions, CalWORKs 2.0 WTW triage, and the WTW handbook.

Clients also noted challenges in attending initial activities, such as medical appointments and competing demands. They suggested advanced notice and flexibility in communication methods and the use of gas cards instead of bus passes to facilitate travel to and from the one county office. These same challenges and approaches designed to mitigate them would benefit orientation attendance, in addition to attendance at other initial activities. At present, other than bus passes the CWD offers transportation assistance in the form of mileage reimbursement to and from approved activities, which typically begin after orientation. The CWD may explore revising this policy in the future and consider ways to offer alternatives to bus passes for clients traveling to and from the county office.

3. Discuss any research or literature that supports the strategies chosen. Cite reference(s), if applicable.

There was no specific research considered when identifying strategies and action steps for this goal. The ability of the CWD to meaningfully serve their clients and successfully implement any strategy is naturally correlated to staff capacity and satisfaction/retention. Ensuring that the CWD is adequately staffed, and workloads are manageable is foundational to being able to engage and support clients towards

successful outcomes. The CWD drew largely from client feedback for more flexible ways to complete orientation in developing Strategy 2.

4. Describe the roles of each partner and collaborator in implementing the selected strategies.

Partner and collaborator feedback was instrumental in prioritizing the focus areas and selecting goals and strategies. The peer review process with county partners provided insight into county-wide challenges and barriers to target for assisting clients in achieving Self-Sufficiency. Acknowledging the county is geographically widespread with most services available in the incorporated city of Susanville, transportation is a barrier for individuals within the unincorporated areas. To help mitigate this challenge, the CWD will refer clients to county public transportation partners by continuing to offer bus passes for clients coming to the office and displaying the local public transportation routes in the lobby.

The CWD will also need to collaborate with other county partners to determine the capacity for offering the to-be-developed orientation video online, as the county website is not under the direction of the CWD.

5. Identify any staff education and training needs, and include any technical assistance needed to implement strategy and achieve goal.

Lassen County strives to have a team of skilled and educated staff to best serve our diverse population. Continuous training is provided to assure familiarity with community resources and program expertise.

Both strategies require the development and implementation of additional staff training. For the first strategy, new WTW Workers will require training and Integrated Case Workers will be cross-trained in Welfare-to-Work and in conducting warm handoffs to WTW Workers. The WTW assigned as lead for QA/QI will need to be trained in the expectations and functions of those responsibilities.

The second strategy requires staff to be trained to regularly inquire about transportation barriers during intake prior to orientation. New WTW Workers will need to be trained in conducting orientation and utilizing the video, once developed.

To mitigate potential staff retention challenges, trainings in coaching, mentoring, and compassion fatigue will be provided, potentially through in-house, UC Davis, and/or Trindel trainings.

These trainings for all staff will need to be scheduled, tracked, and documented on a regular basis to ensure successful completion. All of these will be ongoing training needs as new staff join the CWD or staff change roles.

6. Describe how the CWD plans to mitigate and/or address both known internal and external barriers to achieve this goal.

Increasing the orientation rate through recruitment and training may be impacted by internal barriers such as staff retention. The CWD plans to mitigate challenges with

staff turnover by providing trainings related to compassion fatigue, promoting self-care, and ongoing training for supervisors in coaching and mentoring.

As previously noted, the CWD will need to collaborate with external county partners to determine the capacity for offering the Welfare-to-Work (WTW) orientation video online, as the county's website is monitored and updated by a separate department. The county CWD will explore accessibility through websites or video streaming platforms. When arranging for online viewing, WTW workers will ask the clients their preferred method of delivery of the WTW orientation video, such as email or text message with a link.

7. Describe how your facility will continuously evaluate each action step taken to see if improvement is being achieved. (e.g., tracking tools, meetings, monitoring, etc.) Include who will be responsible for follow up and compliance.

The CWD will monitor and analyze the Orientation Attendance rate on an ongoing systematic basis. The Program Manager will lead quarterly Cal-OAR check-ins. The meeting will begin with reviewing the most recent trend reports and provide progress updates on the various strategies and action steps. Every six months, the team will specifically review progress towards the stated goal – 5% increase every 12 months. The team will use CalSAWS reports and the Cal-OAR data provided by CDSS to identify successes and challenges and determine needed improvements based on the challenges.

Goal 2: Increase Engagement Rate to 20% from 3% by reviewing Cal-OAR performance measures, CalSAWS reports, and ad hoc reports; improving by 8.5% every 12 months within 2 years (for a total of a 17% improvement).

- **Strategy 1:** Enhance capacity to support client engagement
- **Strategy 2:** Enhance equity and social awareness toward WTW Clients

1. Explain the reasoning or methodology which was used to determine this goal.

Lassen County utilized data on the performance measures and feedback from partners and collaborators to identify priorities and goals for the SIP. Multiple tools (e.g., needs gap analysis, problem tree analysis, etc.) were used with internal staff, external partners, and clients to determine areas most in of improvement and identify root causes that could inform improvement goals and strategies.

The Engagement Rate measure was selected from the Ongoing Engagement programmatic grouping as the CWD has consistently performed below the state average on this measure and the CWD is generally aware of challenges with performance on this measure.

During discussions around the Ongoing Engagement programmatic grouping of measures, there was general consensus among partners and collaborators about the key challenges and barriers in Lassen County, primarily transportation and childcare

challenges for clients, and collaboration amongst public serving agencies and community partners.

2. What led the CWD to these improvement strategies?

Upon completing the CSA Report, the Cal-OAR planning team met to discuss partner feedback and further narrow the focus for the SIP. The team discussed each performance measure identified as a priority by partners, drafting a broad list of potential strategies for each measure. The team then considered the resources needed to implement the various strategies and each strategy's potential for impacting the measure, i.e., will the strategy have a broad or narrow impact. The team selected the strategies that would have the most impact while also being feasible given the CWD's current and projected resources.

Partners identified a lack of transportation as a primary factor that impacts ongoing engagement. Clients in the remote regions of the county experience difficulty traveling to the primary county office and are likely to miss appointments if they cannot secure reliable transportation.

Clients emphasized a need for better communication from case managers around sanctions. They reported often being unaware of program requirements or not understanding the reasoning behind program requirements. Although this information is provided to them in the orientation, clients noted it gets "lost" in the overwhelming amount of information they receive at orientation.

Staff noted the impact of the universal good cause waiver on this grouping of measures. The extremely low sanction rate during this reporting period is atypical and likely to change with the expiration of the good cause waiver. Staff anticipate some resistance from clients who will now be required to re-engage in activities or face sanctions.

Strategies selected for improving the engagement rate were developed in consideration of this feedback from partners, clients, and staff. While the geography of the county is a challenge that is unable to be changed, and limited public transportation is a systemic factor that the CWD has little ability to impact, action steps acknowledging transportation barriers are included in the strategies for not only this goal (increasing the engagement rate), but also for goal one (increasing the orientation attendance rate). In both goals, the public transportation routes will be displayed at the CWD. Additionally, in goal one, a staff member will be trained to ask clients about potential transportation barriers during intake.

Action steps designed to enhance the capacity of WTW workers to support client engagement (Strategy 1) will offer staff more time to communicate program information to clients and respond to questions. Additionally, the development and implementation of an orientation video (Goal 1, Strategy 2), available online for clients to view at the time, place, and pace of their choosing is complementary to Strategy 1 (Goal 2) and will provide another resource for digesting and managing the large volume of program information, as clients can pause, rewind, and/or rewatch segments as necessary.

To support staff in managing the anticipated impact of the ending of the good cause waiver and encourage greater equity and REIB awareness, a set of action steps

designed to provide education and skill building in these areas were developed for Strategy 2. These steps include REIB and trauma-informed care trainings and the recruitment of diverse staff members that reflect the county/client community, intended to result in more awareness of and sensitivity to client perspectives and barriers and improved skills and new approaches to working with clients to overcome barriers to engagement, participation, and ultimately long-term success.

3. Discuss any research or literature that supports the strategies chosen. Cite reference(s), if applicable.

Many of the action steps for the strategies chosen for this goal involve increasing awareness or knowledge in one way or another, i.e., for clients, knowledge of transportation routes and program requirements; for staff, knowledge of client transportation barriers and awareness of client perspectives and unique needs.

It is generally recognized that increased awareness of available services and potential benefits to customers is correlated to increased engagement and participation. Similarly, increased awareness and sensitivity to clients' unique needs is typically acknowledged as an important component in building the necessary skills to successfully engage clients, especially those who may be most reluctant. However, no specific research was considered when developing strategies and action steps for this goal.

4. Describe the roles of each partner and collaborator in implementing the selected strategies.

The CWD engages with partners and collaborators to design and prioritize ongoing engagement goals and strategies. The peer review process included valuable insights from other counties experiencing similar challenges, and recommendations around staffing enhancements were strategized. Collaborative discussions with county administration valued the need for a Welfare-to-Work lead position and welcomed Welfare-to-Work cross training across the division.

As noted above, Lassen County is geographically widespread with most services available in the incorporated city of Susanville, and transportation is a known barrier for individuals within the unincorporated areas. To address this barrier, the CWD will refer clients to county public transportation partners by continuing to offer bus passes for clients coming to the office and displaying the local public transportation routes in the lobby.

5. Identify any staff education and training needs, and include any technical assistance needed to implement strategy and achieve goal.

Both strategies require the development and implementation of additional staff training. For the first strategy, new WTW Workers will require training and Integrated Case Workers will be cross-trained in Welfare-to-Work and in conducting warm handoffs to WTW Workers. The WTW assigned as lead for QA/QI will need to be trained in the expectations and functions of those responsibilities. Additionally, staff will need to be trained to schedule routine follow-ups with WTW clients.

The second strategy involves staff participating in REIB annually and trauma-informed care trainings regularly. Furthermore, to mitigate potential staff retention challenges, trainings in coaching, mentoring, and compassion fatigue will be provided, potentially through in-house, UC Davis, and/or Trindel training.

These trainings for all staff will need to be scheduled, tracked, and documented on a regular basis to ensure successful completion. All of these will be ongoing training needs as new staff join the CWD or staff change roles.

6. Describe how the CWD plans to mitigate and/or address both known internal and external barriers to achieve this goal.

Similar to the strategies for increasing the county's orientation attendance rate in Goal 1, staff retention is one an internal barrier that may pose a challenge to the efforts to increase the ongoing engagement rate in Goal 2 as well. Assigned Welfare-to-Work Workers will require consistent, ongoing training, and knowledge gaps may affect the strategies if there is staff turnover.

The CWD plans to mitigate challenges with staff turnover by providing trainings related to compassion fatigue, promoting self-care, and ongoing training for supervisors in coaching and mentoring. Further, balancing caseloads to ensure manageable workloads for staff, included as an action step for strategy one, is intended to increase employee satisfaction and contribute to staff retention.

7. Describe how your facility will continuously evaluate each action step taken to see if improvement is being achieved. (e.g., tracking tools, meetings, monitoring, etc.) Include who will be responsible for follow up and compliance

The CWD will monitor and analyze the Engagement Rate on an ongoing systematic basis. The Program Manager will lead quarterly Cal-OAR check-ins. The meeting will begin with reviewing the most recent trend reports and provide progress updates on the various strategies and action steps. Every six months, the team will specifically review progress towards the stated goal – 8.5% increase every 12 months. The team will use CalSAWS reports, and the Cal-OAR data provided by CDSS to identify successes and challenges and determine needed improvements based on the challenges.

Section 2: Peer Review

Peer county/ counties selected for collaboration and consultation:

Siskiyou & Trinity

1. Discuss how the Peer Review process impact Cal-SIP development.

The Peer Review process had a notable influence on Lassen County's Cal-SIP development. Lassen County was successful in gleaning valuable insights from its peer counties, leading to a comprehensive reevaluation of strategies and departmental challenges. Lassen County recognizes that the Peer Review process played a pivotal role in prompting Lassen County to develop its goals, ensuring a more precise and focused approach, with particular emphasis on improvement in the CalWORKs/Welfare-to-Work program, distinct from addressing broader departmental challenges.

Lassen County identified strengths and challenges during the County Self-Assessment (CSA) process to consider for the focus measures. The Peer Review process did not identify any new strengths or challenges than those that were discussed in the CSA, rather the peer review process provided an opportunity for Lassen County to thoughtfully consider those strengths and challenges towards deciding at which performance measures their strategic improvement efforts would best be directed. Further, the Peer Review offered a forum for the CWD to comprehensively explore factors that impact the performance measures chosen, develop strategies and action steps designed to affect those measures, and benefit from the sharing of promising practices from peer counties. Discussions with peer counties during the Peer Review provided Lassen County with ideas and perspectives on how peer CWDs are organizing staffing and workloads, collecting and using data, operational methods, and client engagement strategies. This exchange of information informed and shaped root cause analysis discussions and the refinement of SIP strategies and action steps.

2. Discuss steps taken to conduct peer review.

Planning. UCD prepared multiple potential peer review schedules for the county's review. Schedules spanned one to two days and included a mix of presentations and discussions. The county selected a peer review modality (in-person vs. virtual), schedule, dates, and times.

Peer Selection. The planning team identified potential peer counties using the Peer Review Survey Data Characteristics Matrix provided by CDSS. The team considered peer counties' region, size, and similarity to the host county. Once identified, the county contacted potential peer counties via phone and email requesting one to two peers from each county. The planning team sought to recruit at least two peers from different counties to ensure that varied perspectives were represented in the peer review.

Once identified, peers were provided with all materials they would need for the peer review. This included the county's CSA report, slides for the Welcome Orientation and County Overview, interview questions, and preliminary SIP strategies.

Participants. In addition to the peers, county staff were invited to participate in the peer review. Participants included the CWD Program Manager, Analyst, Office Assistant Supervisor, Integrated Case Worker Supervisor, and Integrated Case Workers I/II/III's.

Peer Review. The peer review was conducted in-person on September 19, 2023, and September 20, 2023. It consisted of a series of presentations and focused discussions. All sessions were facilitated by two trained facilitators from UCD. The facilitators previously conducted the county's partner and collaborator engagement events and thus had familiarity with the CWD's structure and staff.

Welcome Orientation. The peer review began with a Welcome Orientation that introduced the peer review participants, provided an overview of Cal-OAR for participants unfamiliar with the process, introduced the Cal-OAR performance measures, and outlined the goals of the peer review.

County Overview. Staff presented an overview of the county demographics and county CalWORKs department to provide peers with context for the CSA findings and SIP strategies. This included a discussion of the department's organizational structure, client demographics, staff demographics, process for assigning cases, and average caseloads.

CSA Findings. The facilitators presented a summary of the county's performance on the Cal-OAR performance measures, highlighting measures on which the county is performing well or needing improvement. They also summarized the partner and collaborator feedback outlined in the CSA Report.

SIP Strategies. The county presented the performance measures under consideration for the SIP and their preliminary goals, strategies, and action steps.

Question and Answer. Peers interviewed county staff using a question list developed by UCD. The list included questions specific to each performance measures to help peers understand the root causes of the challenges the county is seeking to address with its SIP strategies. The questions also guided peers to consider county demographics and how they might impact the provision of services to marginalized populations.

Focused Discussion. The facilitators guided peers and county staff through a discussion of the selected performance measures and SIP strategies. For each measure and strategy, the group discussed:

- *Does the strategy address the root causes of the observed trends?*
- *What potential challenges do peers or staff anticipate the county will face in implementing the strategy?*
- *Do peers have recommendations or other strategies for the county to consider?*

Prioritizing Strategies and Next Steps. To conclude the peer review, peers and county staff voted on which performance measures and strategies to put forth in the SIP Report. The group then identified next steps for each strategy.

3. Briefly summarize observations and action items from Peer Review process.

During the peer review process, partners and peers observed obstacles and provided feedback for quality improvement strategies and insight into equity goals. Root cause analysis discussion during the peer review assisted the county in the development of goals, strategies and action steps to consider for the SIP. Observations and actions items developed and considered during the Peer Review included:

Goal One: Increase Orientation Rate

Strategy One: Recruit and Retain Welfare-to-Work Staff

Action Steps:

- Recruit and Retain Welfare-to-Work Staff
- Induction training for new staff with the possibility of a training unit
 - o Consider starting training cohorts in different training areas
 - o Cross training for leads
 - o De-escalation Training
 - o Off sight trainings
- Eligibility worker to do a warm handoff to Welfare-to-Work worker and provide information to clients
- Connect with transportation services
- Connect with Lassen County Family and Child Resources
- Consider expanding office hours
- Consider offering flex schedules

Strategy Two: Use a video for Orientation

Action Steps:

- Have partners' programs and services in the video orientation
- Marketing- Social media outreach
- 5-year strategy is to get everything back in person

Goal Two: Increase Engagement Rate

Strategy One: Recruit and Retain Welfare-to-Work Staff

Action Steps:

- Recruit and Retain Welfare-to-Work Staff
- Induction training for new staff with the possibility of a training unit

- o Consider starting training cohorts in different training areas
- o Cross training for leads
- o De-escalation Training
- o Off sight trainings
- Eligibility worker to do a warm handoff to Welfare-to-Work worker and provide information to clients
- Connect with transportation services
- Connect with Lassen County Family and Child Resources
- Consider expanding office hours
- Consider offering flex schedules

Other action items to strategize:

- Analyze data in this area because engagement rate may be higher than originally reflected due to the conflict in federal and state requirements
- Connect with similar counties in regard to SB1232 to see how they are handling the conflicting requirements.
- Sorting paperwork for Welfare-to-Work staff, so that the paperwork only verifies hours for Welfare-to-Work and does not change other benefits.

Section 3: Target Measure Summary

Goal 1: Increase Orientation Attendance Rate to 60% from 50% by reviewing Cal-OAR performance measures, CalSAWS reports, and adhoc reports; improving by 5% every 12 months within 2 years (for a total of a 10.0% improvement).

Performance Measure: Orientation Attendance Rate

Baseline Result: 50%

Cal-SIP Start	Progress Report #1:	Progress Report #2:	Cycle End Date:
Time: 05/01/2024	05/09/2025	06/12/2026	06/30/2026

Strategies, Action Steps, and Tracking Improvement:

Strategy 1: Enhance staffing levels, workload manageability, and operational efficiency

Action Steps:

- Cross-train Integrated Case Workers (ICWs) in WTW
- Train ICWs to conduct warm handoffs to WTW Workers
- Assign WTW Lead for QA/QI
- Distribute caseload to WTW Workers to increase opportunities for Orientation
- Recruit 2 Welfare-to-Work (WTW) Workers

Strategy 2: Expand Orientation Opportunities

Action Steps:

- Identify transportation barriers during intake prior to orientation
- Display bus transportation routes in lobby along with orientation dates and times
- Develop Welfare-to-Work Orientation Video in English and Spanish (explore on-line availability)
- Train new Welfare-to-Work Workers in conducting Orientation

Tracking: The CWD will monitor and analyze the Orientation Attendance rate on an ongoing systematic basis. The Program Manager will lead quarterly Cal-OAR check-ins. The meeting will begin with reviewing the most recent trend reports and provide progress updates on the various strategies and action steps. Every six months, the team will specifically review progress towards the stated goal – 5% increase every 12 months. The team will use CalSAWS reports and the Cal-OAR data provided by CDSS to identify successes and challenges and determine needed improvements based on the challenges.

Goal 2: Increase Engagement Rate to 20% from 3% by reviewing Cal-OAR performance measures, CalSAWS reports, and ad hoc reports; improving by 8.5% every 12 months within 2 years (for a total of a 17% improvement).

Performance Measure: Engagement Rate

Baseline Result: 3%

Cal-SIP Start	Progress Report	Progress Report #2:	Cycle End Date:
Time: 05/01/2024	#1: 05/09/2025	06/12/2026	06/30/2026

Strategies, Action Steps, and Tracking Improvement:

Strategy 1: Enhance capacity to support client engagement

Action Steps:

- Cross-train Integrated Case Workers (ICW) in WTW & train ICWs to conduct warm handoffs to WTW Workers
- Assign WTW Lead for QA/QI
- Assign 2 ICWs as WTW Workers
- Balance caseloads so WTW Workers can dedicate more time to client engagement
- Schedule routine follow-ups with each WTW client

Strategy 2: Enhance Equity and Social Awareness toward WTW Clients

Action Steps:

- Actively recruit candidates best suited to serve the diverse community
- Ensure all CWD staff complete REIB Trainings twice a year
- Display bus Transportation routes in lobby
- Ensure Trauma-Informed Care trainings ongoing for staff

Tracking: The CWD will monitor and analyze the Engagement Rate on an ongoing systematic basis. The Program Manager will lead quarterly Cal-OAR check-ins. The meeting will begin with reviewing the most recent trend reports and provide progress updates on the various strategies and action steps. Every six months, the team will specifically review progress towards the stated goal – 8.5% increase every 12 months. The team will use CalSAWS reports, and the Cal-OAR data provided by CDSS to identify successes and challenges and determine needed improvements based on the challenges.